

Orangeville husband in 12th annual walk for cancer research

As the Shoppers Drug Mart Weekend to End Women's Cancers draws near, the time to register as a participant draws closer to a close. The walk, which is in its 12th year in Toronto, draws 4,000 to 5,000 walkers each year and has already raised more than \$141 million towards funding innovative research, treatment and care for women's cancers at the Princess Margaret Cancer Centre.

Eight years ago, the walk became a personal interest of local resident Dan Woods, regional vice-president for RBC and current Captain of Team RBC for the Weekend to End Women's Cancers. Around the time, a woman by the name of Jane Black came to Ontario as part of RBC and began to encourage the Southwestern Ontario area RBC's to get involved.

While the idea seemed like a good one, it was personal reasons that pushed Mr. Woods to put together a team and begin participating.

"It was around that time that my wife, Louise, was diagnosed with cancer - lymphoma - and it just fell into place," explained Mr. Woods. "For me, the timing was perfect and it provided a great opportunity to fight against women's cancer, so that's what got me started."

According to Mr. Woods, one of the big reasons he continues to participate is because of what the walk does when it comes to trying to defeat cancer and find a cure.

"The Princess Margaret Cancer Centre is one of the top five centres in the world, and they've done tremendous work over the years," he said. "Not just for women's cancer, but in all kinds of cancers. To have the chance to make a difference and do something is big, and that is why it's important to stay involved and continue to fight."

Statistically, one in seven Canadian women will be diagnosed with either breast or gynaecologic cancer in their lifetime, which means approximately 31,000 women across the country will receive that diagnosis. It is estimated that over 8,000 women will die this year from the disease.

While Mr. Woods' wife has been in remission for several years now, after receiving chemotherapy for a number of months, he feels that is more reason to keep moving forward with the walk.

"There is still a long way to go, and so many people are affected by cancer, whether they're diagnosed or a family member, friend or coworker is the one with the diagnosis," said Mr. Woods. "It's fantastic to know that you're making a difference. It may not happen today, but we're contributing to the research, and there have been some major developments in the last couple of years."

Each year, Team RBC has between eight and 10 participants from within Mr. Woods' region who take part in the 60-kilometre, two-day walk throughout Toronto. This year, the team hopes to raise over \$140,000 for the 2014 Weekend campaign, and as of July, they had reached half that goal.

Personally, Mr. Woods has raised over \$16,000 over his eight years participating in the walk, and has continued to encourage more people and businesses to participate each year.

"People can get involved in many ways, by donating, volunteering or walking," he said. "Participation in any form will impact those around you who are battling for their own lives. It's a fantastic experience."

The 12th annual Shoppers Drug Mart Weekend to End Women's Cancers will be held in Toronto on September 6 and 7, with participants walking either 60 km in two days or 30 in one day. Funds raised benefit the Princess Margaret Cancer Centre.

"You're making a difference in terms of the battle against cancer, but it's a tremendous personal experience as well," said Mr. Woods. "You're out there walking with thousands of other people, and there is all kinds of hooting and hollering and support along

the way from people in the community. Knowing you partook in that is just such a tremendous accomplishment in itself.?

To get involved with the Weekend to End Women's Cancers, to register as a walker or a team, or to make a donation, visit www.endcancer.ca.